

REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

This is intended as a full and complete response to the Office Action dated January 10, 2007, having a shortened statutory period for response set to expire on April 10, 2007. Please reconsider the claims pending in the application for reasons discussed below.

Claims 22-25 were pending in the application. Claim 22 has been amended. Claims 24-25 have been canceled. Claims 26-31 have been added. Claims 22-23 and 26-31 remain pending following entry of this response. Applicants submit that the amendments and new claims do not introduce new matter.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 23 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The Examiner stated that the present specification does not support the following claim language, "said joining pieces having a geometry such that there is no internal welding required on said joining pieces." Claim 22, from which claim 23 depends, has been amended so that support in the specification can be clearly identified. Support for the amendment is found in the specification at least on page 6, lines 31-34. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

Claim 23 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner argued that the recitation "said joining pieces having a geometry such that there is no internal welding required on said joining pieces" renders the claim indefinite. As stated above, claim 22, from which claim 23 depends, has been amended and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this rejection.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 22 and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by *Bland* et al. (2895747, hereinafter *Bland*).

Claim 22 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by GB 824717.

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

"A claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference." *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). "The identical invention must be shown in as complete detail as is contained in the ... claim." *Richardson v. Suzuki Motor Co.*, 868 F.2d 1226, 1236, 9 USPQ2d 1913, 1920 (Fed. Cir. 1989). The elements must be arranged as required by the claim. In re *Bond*, 910 F.2d 831, 15 USPQ2d 1566 (Fed. Cir. 1990).

In this case, *Bland* does not disclose "each and every element as set forth in the claim". For example, *Bland* does not disclose joining pieces that are welded to pieces of equipment so that the welding is not applied to the inner surfaces of the equipment. The Examiner argued that *Bland* specifically teaches that "weld 21 is made joining members 11, 18, and 12 integrally." Office Action Dated January 10, 2007, page 3-4. The Examiner also argued that *Bland* specifically teaches that "pipe 37 is placed in position and a weld 41 is made to join pipes 32 and 37 and to weld ring 33 to the pipes." Office Action Dated January 10, 2007, page 4. However, *Bland* also teaches that the welded regions of the equipment are on both the outer and inner surfaces of at least one of the pieces of equipment. See *Bland* Col. 2, lines 21-24; Figures 1-3, items 13, 14, 16, and 21; Col. 3, lines 41-44; Figure 4, items 33, 34, 35, and 41. At column 2, lines 21-24, *Bland* states, "Referring to Figure 1, we have shown a steel member 11, which in this embodiment is a steel plate, to which has been welded a steel back-up bar 12 by means of a fillet weld 13." At column 3, lines 43-44, *Bland* further states, "A back-up ring 31 is welded to a pipe 32 by means of a weld 33." In addition, Figures 1-5 of *Bland* show that welds 13, 33, and 34 are welded to the inner surface of at least one piece equipment 11 and 32, which welds are protectively coated, and welds 21, 41, and 52 are welded to the outer surface of the same pieces of equipment.

According to the present application, when a protective coating is applied over a filler material, such as a weld, the diffusion speeds of various chemical elements are affected leading to reduced quality and thickness in the welded region with respect to the base material. Specification, Page 2, lines 27-34. To prevent coating over any welds, the present application states that when welding the joining piece with the pieces of equipment, the welds are made on the outer surface of the pieces of equipment so that the welds are not applied to the inner surfaces of the equipment, which are subject to corrosion. Specification, Page 6, lines 31-34. Amended claim 22 includes the limitation that the joining pieces are welded to the pieces of equipment in a way that the welding is not applied to the inner surfaces of said pieces of equipment. Therefore, since *Bland* does not teach, show, or suggest that the inner surfaces of the pieces of equipment are not welded on, as recited in amended claim 22, the claims are believed to be allowable.

GB 824717 also does not disclose “each and every element as set forth in the claim.” For example, GB 824717 does not disclose joining pieces that are welded to pieces of equipment so that the welding is not applied to the inner surfaces of the equipment. The Examiner stated, “GB 824717 teaches that the components are connected by butt-welding (2) sleeves 3a and 3b together which sleeves are butt-welded (4) to components 1a and 1b.” However, Figures 1-4 of GB 824717 clearly show that welds 2, 4, and 4a are applied on both outer and inner surfaces of the equipment. Therefore, GB 824717 does not teach, show, or suggest that the inner surfaces of the pieces of equipment are not welded on, as recited in amended claim 22.

Based on the above arguments, Applicants believe that the claims are in condition for allowance, and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, it is believed that the present application now stands in condition for allowance, and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner believe a telephone call would expedite the prosecution of the application, he is invited to call Applicants' attorney at 336-643-3065.

Respectfully submitted,

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